



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Plant Management Enhancement Activity-Plant Materials On-Farm Assessment & Evaluation

Plant Materials Management Overview

Using plant materials to address conservation resource concerns has a significant influence on soil, water, air, wildlife, and energy. This enhancement involves the on-farm assessment and evaluation studies of plant materials in research plots or conservation practices. Activities involve evaluating the overall performance and range of adaptation of plants in their final stage of evaluation and previously released plants with limited information on their adaptability and performance. This activity will provide multiple benefits to the producer and the environment depending on the plant species selected for evaluation.

Benefits

On-Farm Assessment & Evaluation studies will increase plant health and vigor, increase populations of beneficial insects and pollinators, improve soil health, reduce soil erosion, improve forage quality, improve grazing opportunities, improve water quality, and determine ornamental value.

Criteria for Plant Materials On-Farm Assessment & Evaluation Enhancement Activity

This enhancement requires planting of test materials and comparison materials. Participants will perform site preparation, install the planting and document site specific information, collect annual evaluation and management data on plants and provide completed worksheets to the cooperating field office with photographs of the planting.

Plant Materials activities applicable to on –farm assessment & evaluations:

- Erosion control
- Critical area revegetation, coastal dune restoration
- Food and cover for wildlife
- Restoring a native plant environment, prairie landscaping
- Wetland and riparian planting
- Windbreaks, windstrip barriers
- Biomass fuel wood production
- Streambank and shoreline stabilization
- Filterstrips
- Pasture and hayland planting
- Riparian buffers
- Site rehabilitation after fire



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1. The following is a general outline of procedures for NRCS Field Offices and Plant Materials Staff for customers interested in signing up for the Plant Materials enhancement.
1. Participant applies and is accepted into enhancement. Field office explains enhancement activities.
2. If participant expresses interest in the Plant Materials On-Farm Assessment and Evaluation Enhancement the Field Office accesses the national Plant Materials website (<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/CSP/>) to determine what plants are potentially available for demonstration or testing in the specific watershed.
3. If participant elects to implement the Plant Materials On-Farm Research Enhancement Activity and the field office determines that the site contains the correct soils (as per PM-website), and represents the desired testing land use (as per PM website), and is free of severe environmental limitations which could preclude successful plant establishment the field office enters a contract line item expressing interest with installation (as a place holder), subject to approval by the plant materials specialist should the site be found unsuitable upon closer inspection, scheduled for the following FY.
4. The field office contacts the appropriate PM Specialist/Center as identified on website so that the specialist can account for the PMC-provided seed being reserved. In some cases, depending on demand, there may not be adequate seed or plants available to meet all requests. The Plant Materials Program will maintain lists of the quantities of PMC-produced materials available for this enhancement.
5. The plant materials specialist will meet with the participant and develop a planting plan which will identify specific planting requirements. Size of plantings will be designed to meet testing and/or demonstration objectives, but will be a maximum of 5 acres for seeded materials and 30 by 300 for transplanted live plants.
6. The PM Specialist/Center will determine if plants materials are to be commercially obtained or PMC provided, will provide developed job sheets and evaluation forms to the participant. If during the evaluation it is found that no plant materials are available for any plant, no planting plan will be developed and the producer will receive no enhancement payment.
7. The PM specialist/Center will provide instruction to the participant to insure installation of a successful planting and subsequent data collection by the participant.
8. The participant will establish the plant materials according to the PMC planting guide and job sheet.



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9. Several worksheets will need to be completed after the participant has been approved to enroll in the enhancement.
 - a. Initial Documentation - The field office completes worksheet “PM-Enhancement-JobSheet”, obtains the participants signature and submits this information to the PM Specialist/Center.
 - b. At Planting Time - The participant completes either worksheet “PM-Herbaceous-Establishment” or “PM-Woody-Establishment” at time of planting and submits this information to the PM Specialist/Center through the local field office.
 - c. Biannual Evaluation - The participant, with the appropriate PM Specialist/Center, completes the appropriate worksheet “PM-Herbaceous-Evaluation” or “PM-Woody-Evaluation” biannually.
10. Plant Materials staff will analyze and report submitted evaluations via Technical Reports and/or other Plant Materials technical documents.

Reference:

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2000. National Plant Materials Manual, Title 190, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 2000